

Running an Effective Meeting Guidelines for Main Street Board Chairs

Your primary role as a board chair is to be a meeting manager. Remember that board members are volunteering their time for all Main Street activities—including board meetings. Their involvement in these activities will depend primarily on how rewarding and productive board meetings are. If you don't actively manage each board meeting—and each agenda item—then it's probable that board meetings will be *unrewarding* and *unproductive* and the program will stagnate. Follow these guidelines to ensure that all board members get the most out of all board meetings.

1. Make sure that all board members are sent a printed agenda at least one week before a board meeting and that they are contacted directly as a reminder two to three days before a board meeting.
2. The agenda should outline the following information:
 - ◆ Each topic or item of discussion and its anticipated action or outcome
 - ◆ Time allotted for each topic/item
 - ◆ Lead person for each topic/item
3. Prioritize the agenda. Make sure that the most important items are addressed first. As a general rule, place items requiring action higher on the agenda than discussion items.
4. Stick to the times allotted. Don't allow the discussion to wander or bog down. If it appears that you won't be able to bring the discussion to closure (action) on a given topic/item, then defer it until the next meeting. If guests request time on the agenda, place them after topics/items requiring action, inform them of specifically how much time they will have, and hold them to that limit.
5. Ensure that everyone can voice his or her perspective. Don't allow individual board members to dominate the meeting or to "bully" others. Take the prerogative to cut off individuals who do so to bring the discussion back "on task." Ask members for their input—don't wait for them offer it. Along these lines: Don't allow the meeting to become the "manager's report."
6. Don't simply schedule the next board meeting. Use the end of a board meeting to gather suggestions for the agenda for the next meeting. Also, make sure that assignments for the manager and board members are clearly articulated before adjourning. Don't allow people to leave with a vague understanding as to what needs to be done before the next meeting.

Signs of a Good Meeting

1. There is a clear agenda and purpose.
2. The meeting starts and finishes on time.
3. There is a good facilitator or leader.
4. The discussion stays focused on the agenda.
5. The right people attend the meeting.
6. There is active group discussion that reaches conclusions.

Signs of a Bad Meeting

1. There is no clear agenda or purpose.
2. The meeting starts late and ends late.
3. The meeting lacks management.
4. The discussion wanders without closure or action.
5. The wrong people attend the meeting.
6. There is little participation in the discussion.